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## CURRENT OPINION

### **Has the War Discredited Christianity?**

This question is used as the title of an interesting article by Patrick J. Healey in the *Ecclesiastical Review* for April. This writer regrets that at the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in the summer of 1914 calmness of judgment and moderation of speech on matters of public interest seem to have passed into abeyance. "The magnitude of the conflict was matched by the distortion of vision it produced," he says. In these early days the favorite theme among certain alarmists was the probable effect of the war on the Christian religion. Such phrases as the following were in common use: "Has Christianity broken down?" "A sign of the failure of Christian civilization," "Why we not only can, but must, continue to be Christians." The time was perilous, and it was not reassuring to find pilots deserting the sinking ship. Mr. Healey points out that the claim that the war spelled bankruptcy of Christianity implied that the war itself was to be without fruit. This was tantamount to taking a position in direct opposition to the view that the world would be enriched through the unprecedented sacrifices of the present, by a future of triumphant democracy, of extinct militarism, of an era of justice for the small and weak nations, and in the total elimination of secret diplomacy and caste rule. Another view of the author is that those timorous persons were in error in "thinking that the welfare of the Christian religion was bound up with the highly developed social and material civilization of the twentieth century." He says: "Christianity is not necessarily wedded to any form of historic civilization." Positively he maintains that the industrial and social and educational revolutions, the story of the conquest of space and time, of steam and

telephone and telegraph and aeroplane and electricity, should be read in the light of the revelations of social injustice and of poverty and crime and discrimination as disclosed in social statistics and surveys. As he says, "from the standpoint of Christianity a social system in which one-third of the population of the largest city in the world lived in constant poverty, and in which most industrial cities could show equally deplorable conditions, stood badly in need of reform and regeneration." The writer confidently expects that the sufferings of the fathers in this present war will mean that their children will have a freer and fuller field in which to do the will of the Father. But the most encouraging thing that is to be said from the viewpoint of Christianity is that it is not necessary to wait for the verdict of time, for already observers in all countries have reported that the war has revived the instincts of religion in the hearts of men, and the old saying that suffering brings humanity to the foot of the cross has been abundantly verified. He quotes Professor Eucken as having said:

Christianity will condemn as immoral a war which has its roots in covetousness, in love of conquest, or in envy, with the same resoluteness that it passes a favorable ethical judgment on a people that defends itself against injustice and protects its holy possessions.

### **The Eschatology of the Fourth Gospel**

Edward Grubb, writing in the *Expository Times* for April, thinks that there has not been enough attention directed of late to the eschatology of the Fourth Gospel. He understands that this Gospel is an idealized picture of Jesus as the incarnate Logos, worked out on a basis of historic facts and intended to bring out what the author believed to be their inner and spiritual significance. He also understands that the author of the Fourth Gospel represents the

most enlightened section of Christian thought at the close of the first century. Mr. Grubb takes exception to the view frequently held—namely, that in the Fourth Gospel, apart from two passages (John 5:28, 29; 21:22, 23), the apocalyptic and eschatological element disappears. He thinks that it is more accurate to say that this element is transmuted by fusion with the great conceptions of the writer. Broadly speaking, this means that the inward and spiritual replaces the outward and spectacular. Eschatology is transfigured, and its terms revalued. He understands that the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah acts in the thought of the author as a stage toward belief in him as the Logos or Son of God. The Kingdom idea is preserved in its future significance, but emphasis is also placed upon the present Kingdom. Indeed, he thinks that the ideas of the synoptists have been transformed by virtue of being taken up into the great conceptions of the Fourth Gospel. This transformation of ideas he thinks is illustrated in the use of the terms “judgment” and “glory.” In the Synoptics the term “judgment” is used to convey the idea of a mighty event in the future, but in the Fourth Gospel the term is used to indicate an ever-present function of the Logos. The term “glory” no longer means merely something he is about to win when he is manifested as the Messiah; it is something he has temporarily abandoned “by descending out of heaven,” but which he is to regain. The “glory” of Jesus is the exaltation and victory that comes through humiliation and death for men. In other words, the real “glory” of Jesus is the manifestation in him of the divine character. Furthermore, the crude millennial splendors of the Synoptics are replaced by the coming of Christ by his living spirit into the hearts of his true followers; it is into this that the Parousia has been transformed. The amazing conclusion which the writer of this article

arrives at is that the earlier writers of the Synoptics did not fathom the depth of those sayings which they reported, while the Fourth Gospel gives a clue to what lay behind the imagery in which Jesus clothed his thoughts of the glory he was to win through death and of the victory he was to achieve by perfect obedience.

#### **The Development of Christian Institutions and Beliefs**

Under this caption Alfred Fawkes has written a credible article in the *Harvard Theological Review* for April. By way of introduction to the matter under discussion the writer makes clear the distinction existing between logical development and real development. The former is the explication of the content of a notion, and nothing new is added; it is the kind of development that is fostered by the theologians of Roman Catholicism. The latter supposes a change in us as well as in the notion, and the origin of the process is the unity of origin and direction, but not of content. Having attempted to make plain what real development means, Mr. Fawkes proceeds to show that the institutions and beliefs of the church are the product of real development. He takes pains to direct his readers to the fact that the development of the church has been unceasing, but that the development has not always been equally steady, for there have been times when the development has been catastrophic. In tracing the reconstruction that has accompanied this development the writer starts with the eschatology of the early Christians. He significantly remarks that the ethical interest of eschatology is as important as the theological. He says of present-day ethics: “The criticism of ethics is still in the making. It has to be thought out and to justify itself, to find its proper methods and form.” He credits the modern emphasis upon the eschatology in the New Testament with having taught an important lesson to

modern New Testament interpretation—namely, that it is hopeless to attempt to understand primitive Christianity till we have ceased to look at it from the standpoint of the Christianity of our own day. He thinks that primitive Christianity had three main features: (1) enthusiasm, (2) the belief in the Parousia, (3) the opposition between Palestinian and Pauline religion. This primitive Christianity was short-lived; before the middle of the second century it had disappeared so completely that it is difficult even to imagine it. The reconstruction which followed was radical, and Christianity ceased to be what it had been and became what it had not been. Mr. Fawkes holds the opinion that no later construction of Christianity can compare either in extent or in significance with that which took place when the New Testament community developed into the church of the Fathers. After tracing the development of the church through the Reformation and the illumination he reaches our own time, when the question of development has again become one of the first importance. He finds himself in the position where the old does not satisfy and the new has not yet come to be. He says: "The old stars are set; the new are not yet risen." In his discussion of the requirements of the new development he says: "What is essential in Christ is neither speculative subtlety nor historical detail, but the divine mediation." He thinks that for the new development the sense of the community will play an increasingly important part, for already it has become to us what the proof from miracles or prophecy was to former generations. He regrets, however, that Protestantism tends to lose sight of this important factor while Catholicism tends to emphasize it. Mr. Fawkes says that the religion of the future will differ widely from that of the present. The simultaneous movement of thought in all the churches is calculated to excite the attention of the observer as were

the signs which announced the shattering of the imposing fabric of European society which took place more than a century ago. He applies the words of Burke to the new situation:

If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted for it; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope will forward it; and then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate.

#### **Thoughts on Infant Baptism**

Professor H. R. MacIntosh, writing in the *Expositor* (London), for March, prefaces a discussion on infant baptism with the following: "The simplification of theology which began long before the present war is likely to proceed at an accelerated pace when the great struggle has died down, and men are remodeling their lives. Strong tendencies will then operate to expel from the creed or practice of the church every element which cannot be put in a direct relation to Christ and his redeeming influence." The remarkable thing is that after such an analysis of the trend of modern thinking the writer proceeds to say: "And if this should happen, one of the first doctrines to benefit by sharpened appreciation may well be infant baptism." A perusal of this article reveals the fact that Professor MacIntosh takes a frank, but unusual, position in respect to the doctrine of infant baptism. He grants that the main argument which has been commonly urged against the practice of infant baptism has the burden of evidence in its favor—namely, that infant baptism is not enjoined in the New Testament, nor is there any New Testament record of its prevalence. He does not admit, however, that infant baptism is discordant with the meaning of Christianity. Contrary to this objection he says: "Infant baptism is simply the form

of baptism to which the church was led by the progress of its experience illumined by the Spirit, and its justification consists in a complete harmony with the interior sense of the Christian Gospel." Professor MacIntosh says that one who has been reared in a Christian home can give account of his baptism as follows:

"God," he may say, "anticipated me with his goodness, placing me from the outset in the bosom of the Christian people, who look to Jesus in faith. He met me at Life's threshold and by the pledge of this sacrament declared me to have an interest in that love of his which Jesus represents, announcing that for me there was a great inheritance awaiting, which should be mine in proportion as I accepted it. He held forth to me, even then, the blessings that are in Christ, and this offer he confirmed and sealed by the appointed sign. I am able to look up and remember thankfully that I have never been a stranger to the love of God."

### **The Eschatology of the Second Century**

Frederick C. Grant, the writer of an article in the *American Journal of Theology* for April, entitled "The Eschatology of the Second Century," has set himself the task of presenting the doctrines of eschatology as they are to be found in the writings of the second century and to suggest a solution to the question involved in the relation of second-century eschatology to primitive Christian eschatology. The writer of this article dwells upon the importance which is attached to the bearing which eschatology has upon the interpretation of New Testament literature, and favors the view that the eschatology of the second century throws light upon the history of such thought and feeling in the first century. He explains that the field of his investigation begins where the New Testament leaves off and ends with Irenaeus. The eschatology of the second century starts with the assumption that it was the purpose of God to foreshadow before men some of the secrets of the future.

Various conceptions of the end of the world were entertained, as, for example, that the world would gradually wax old as does a garment and fall into decay or that it would be consumed by fire. The conception of Anti-Christ, whose activities were to precede the Parousia and the last judgment, was present. The doctrine of the second advent of Christ was a permanent and indispensable element in the eschatology of the second century. It is stated that the fact of Christ's coming in glory to judge both the quick and the dead was nowhere questioned except among the Gnostics, and that to deny the "hope of his coming was to cease to be Christian," even as in the first century. The resurrection and the last judgment were similarly unquestioned elements, and the last judgment was to be pronounced upon the wicked demons as well as upon men. Following the last judgment was to come the final state of blessedness, which was understood to mean communion with God, company with Christ, and reigning with him in everlasting felicity. But it was not made clear what the relation of the millennium to the general judgment and to the final state of the blessed and the condemned was to be; it is difficult to know whether the dominant thought was with Barnabas in his view that this state of happiness merges into that of final bliss, or with Irenaeus in affirming that the promises of Christ require fulfilment upon earth. Mr. Grant is convinced that there is a confusion due to the combination of two conflicting eschatologies, one with a temporal Kingdom and the other with an eternal Kingdom, but this does not prevent him from thinking that the prevailing view of the final state of the condemned was one of punishment in fire and torment, and everlasting death. The intermediate state was not a universal belief. Thus it is held that the eschatology of the second century is definitely a continuation of the first-century eschatology, and without as much

change as is commonly supposed. The Christians of this period used the Old Testament as a norm for their theological thinking, and the New Testament writings were gradually being incorporated with them. Accordingly the writer concludes that Chiliasm is due, formally, to the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse of John, but that essentially it is a continuation of the old apocalyptic speculations of Judaism.

### **Ritschl's Criterion of Religious Truth**

Edgar S. Brighton, knowing that there has been no extended treatment of Ritschl's conception of the criterion of truth, has written such a treatment in the *American Journal of Theology* for April. At the outset the writer dispenses with two commonly accepted erroneous presuppositions: that the theological system of Ritschl was a closely knit, logical system in the strict sense, and that the center of Ritschl's thought is the value-judgment. The value-judgment was not the discovery of Ritschl, but was derived from Hermann Lotze. Mr. Brighton finds that there are three different criteria of truth implicit in Ritschl's thinking. The first is that which the community believes. Under this category it is argued that a Christian theologian must genuinely belong to a Christian community and must start from the presupposition of the truth of the community faith in Jesus. Theology, Ritschl understands, is disinterested objective science, the subject-matter of which is the faith of the Christian community, and the logical method of which is that of all the other sciences. This emphasis on the community faith is accompanied by a reduction of objective Christianity to a minimum. The writer says of Ritschl's appeal to the community faith: "Whatever is believed by the Christian community, expressing the social aspect of Christianity and its character as a historic movement founded by Jesus Christ, is true

and valuable for that community. Christian truth is not accessible to others. Such is Ritschl's outstanding attitude toward the problem of truth." The second criteria of truth may be stated thus: that is true which satisfies our active ethical nature. Ritschl rejects the traditional *testimonium* on the ground that it treated the self as passive. He rejects mysticism because it lacks ethical sanity. It is the pragmatist ethical criterion by which Ritschl is chiefly known, but this criterion, nevertheless, does not profoundly satisfy him. The third criterion is based on the view that what is given in experience is true. This shades into mysticism, and in spite of the rejection which Ritschl makes of it. The ultimate religious truth, as he understands it, is that which is given in the experience of immediacy and derives its value and its truth from that immediacy. In addition, there came to be a growing emphasis upon the feeling element in the highest experience. As Mr. Brighton says, "It seems clear that the general trend of his thinking as he grew older was away from the primacy of the will toward the primacy of the emotions, of what satisfies the heart." Ritschl rates experience above theory, content above form, and therefore the term "empiricist" is applied to him. But the writer of this article, while admitting that empiricism was Ritschl's strength and glory, argues that it was also his weakness. In this argument he mentions five directions in which he was limited thereby: first, it prevented him from understanding the only philosophers to whom he was willing to lend a hearing; secondly, it closed his eyes to the essential fact of the unity of self-consciousness and of truth as the expression of the attitude of a total personal life over against the world; thirdly, it led him to see the unity of the social group of the Christian community, which is much more hypothetical than the unity of the self; fourthly, it led him to a doctrine of deism, whereas

his Christian training led him to a doctrine of immanence; fifthly, it led him to a serious retrenchment of the missionary and evangelistic character of Christianity. In conclusion Mr. Brighton says: "Ritschl does not give us a satisfactory criterion of religious truth. But he has taught us, as his chief message, the fruitful principle that religious truth is primarily social."

**The Church and the New Democracy:  
a Paradox**

Frances Evelyn Warwick has written in the *Bookman*, May, an article under the same title as that above. The writer lives in England and her brothers and relatives have gone to the trenches, some never to return. Under the press of the anxiety which is occasioned on behalf of her friends, added to her fear that exhaustion has overtaken many of the movements which were well under way in the direction of social reform, she has turned to find a haven of refuge in the church, but to her dismay and disappointment has not found it. She has discovered that the Anglican church has been turned into an agency of militarism and that the clergy have become recruiting agents. The effort of her article is to make it known that the Anglican church has missed its opportunity in this unparalleled national crisis to minister to the spiritual needs of the people and so fulfil the purpose of its existence. In her words:

Ministers of religion, even though they know it not, are on their trial just now, and in the near future a verdict will be given by those to whom they minister. In the memory of the living there has been no graver need for their services, never has the world held so many wounds that defy physical healing. It is a tragedy that with the vast increase of our spiritual needs there should be this sudden failure of spiritual solace, and the danger to the established church is a very real one.

The writer of this article pathetically describes the situation in England, when the men, upon whom the women and children and aged were accustomed to lean for support, were hurried to the fighting line in France. This was the time when the women could no longer turn to their husbands and sons for comfort and was therefore the supreme moment when the church should have revealed itself a light in the darkness and a comfort in distress, but, instead, on every hand it is acknowledged that the church has not fulfilled its primary function. In the face of this condemnation of the Anglican church the author states that nonconformity has proved the safety-valve and that the Church of England will be in the future, far more than in the immediate past, the asylum of a steadily dwindling minority. The writer is not advocating peace propaganda, but she craves for the spiritual lessons of the war and for some prevision of the conditions to follow. The complaint is also made that when the war started there were very definite signs that the time was not far hence when some of the social advances for which heroic souls have struggled would be realized. After the war had made its inroads and the spirit of the people was chastened, the church lacked the courage to assume the leadership in spiritual and moral reform. The writer of this article believes that religion has a function to perform that is of primary import, and, while acknowledging the importance of recruiting and other military services, she maintains that the duty of the minister is to respond to the high demands of his own particular calling. She speaks of herself as one of the countless multitude who came seeking the source of spiritual enforcement, but, like the others, has been baffled in her quest.